



Department of Justice



Office of Justice Programs

**REMARKS AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY
PRINCIPAL DEPUTY ASSISTANT ATTORNEY GENERAL
KATHARINE T. SULLIVAN
NATIONAL OPIOID AND EMERGING DRUG THREATS
POLICY AND PRACTICE FORUM
THURSDAY, JULY 18, 2019**

WASHINGTON – Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General Katharine T. Sullivan today spoke to more than 200 law enforcement officials, forensic laboratory personnel, medical examiners and coroners, researchers and other experts at the National Opioid and Emerging Drug Threats Policy and Practice Forum.

“It’s a privilege to work for an Administration so focused on ending this epidemic, and to work with an Attorney General so committed to giving our state and local partners the tools they need. We are gaining ground. Though the numbers are still far too high, drug overdose deaths were down more than four percent during the 12-month period ending November 2018, compared with the same period a year earlier.

“But as Attorney General Barr has reminded us, there’s a lot more work to be done.

“We’ve made serious investments in combating the opioid epidemic, and we will be continuing our investments this year. I’m particularly proud of our support of drug courts. I started a drug court and a DUI court when I served on the bench in Colorado. Drug courts are effective. They curb abuse, they reduce recidivism, and they save money—and I would love to see one in every community in America.

“But as much as I love drug courts, they can be only one part of the response. We need to tackle this problem from all angles:

- We need to strengthen data sharing to prevent over-prescribing.
- We need strong public safety and public health partnerships.
- We need to do our best to make sure every community that faces an opioid problem has the resources to tackle it. This year, BJA will be awarding grants of up to \$750,000 each under a program called Rural Responses to the Opioid Epidemic. We’ll be giving priority consideration to applicants in Opportunity Zones.
- We need to help the children who are innocently caught up in this epidemic. Last year, OJP awarded \$35 million to support services for children and youth who have been victimized as a result of the crisis.

- And, of course, we need to continue devoting resources to research that cover issues like rural opioid abuse and the use of artificial intelligence to identify darknet opioid traffickers.

“The National Institute of Justice is also leading our work to expand the role of forensics in combating this crisis. The number of overdose deaths in the U.S. may run into the tens of thousands. NIJ is working with our federal partners to refine the technology necessary to identify these substances, get them off the street and treat users before they overdose.

“Finally, it’s important to recognize that while the scale of the opioid crisis is overwhelming many communities, particularly on the East Coast, in the Midwest, and in Appalachian communities, other areas of the country—especially in the West—are dealing with a disturbing rise in the use of meth, cocaine and other stimulants.

“According to the National Drug Threat Survey, law enforcement agencies in the Pacific and West Central U.S. report that meth is their greatest drug threat. And we’re seeing a growth in seizures of meth combined with fentanyl and fentanyl-related compounds.

“We’re very fortunate to have an amazing Attorney General who understands the impact of this crisis. I’ve heard him say that he left his first stint as Attorney General in 1993 during one major drug epidemic, only to return to office a quarter-century later to find another, even bigger epidemic. He is deeply concerned about the toll this current crisis is taking, and he is personally committed to using every tool at his disposal to do something about it.

“I, too, want to pledge the resources of my office to work with you as we fight the scourge of drugs and crime in America. Please tell me how we can help you.”

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